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Riddle of the Burial Grounds

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Riddle of the Burial Grounds

Radioactief materiaal, opgeslagen in betonnen tunnels diep onder de grond, kan een catastrofale ramp veroorzaken tot ver in de toekomst, tot in een tijdperk waar we ons nauwelijks iets bij kunnen voorstellen. Met aandacht voor tekens, voorwerpen en mijlpalen uit het verleden, kijkt deze groepstentoonstelling vastberaden naar de toekomst. Naar een toekomst waarin landschappen bezaaid zijn met industriële ruïnes, uitgeholde spelonken, objecten en signalen die ons allen hebben overleefd. Een toekomst die wordt bepaald door de verwoestende realiteit van het oneindig trage verval van radioactiviteit.



In concrete-clad tunnels deep within the earth, radioactive matter is being buried on a daily basis. The potential of this matter to create catastrophic disaster will continue deep into the future, into a period of time we can barely perceive of, yet alone imagine. Troubling over signs, objects and markers that endure from the past, this exhibition stares unblinkingly into the future, to a landscape littered with industrial ruin and excavated caverns – objects and messages that will outlast us, and a future counted in the devastating, radioactive reality of half-lives.

“Vernietig deze merktekens niet. Deze rechtopstaande stenen markeren een gebied dat ooit werd gebruikt om radioactief afval te begraven. Dit afval geeft een onzichtbare energie af die planten, dieren en mensen kan vernietigen. De stenen en het water in dit gebied zien er misschien niet ongewoon uit en voelen of smaken niet ongewoon, maar ze kunnen vergiftigd zijn. Deze merktekens zijn ontworpen om 10.000 jaar te blijven bestaan. Boor hier niet. Graaf hier niet.”

(‘Containment’, een film van Peter Galison & Robb Moss)

We worden aangetrokken tot voorwerpen, merktekens en ruïnes. We bedenken ze, maken ze, graven ze op, restaureren, categoriseren en exploreren ze. De aarde is bezaaid met raadselachtige signalen die wetenschappers gebruiken om het verhaal van onze planeet te vertellen en de geologische geschiedenis te ontleden. Verandering is op komst – of ze nu zorgvuldig gestaafd is met bewijzen of op een fantastische manier verzonnen. Het klimaat is veranderd, het tijdperk is aanwijsbaar veranderd en onze relatie tot tijd is veranderd. Riddle of the Burial Grounds beweegt zich binnen de dramatische boog van de geologische geschiedenis. De hoofdpersonages zijn verhalen en voorwerpen die betekenis hebben tot ver voorbij onze menselijke levensduur en tot in het diepe verleden. Ze proberen zich de signalen, talen, monumenten of overblijfselen voor te stellen die tot in de verre toekomst hun communicatieve kracht zouden kunnen behouden.

Wij leven in een tijdperk waarin mensen de dominante kracht van verandering zijn geworden op deze planeet. Toen Paul Crutzen in 2000 op een conferentie in Mexico in een ogenschijnlijk geïmproviseerd commentaar dit tijdvak bestempelde als het ‘Antropoceen’, bracht [hij] effectief de verschillende tijdschalen waarin ons bestaan

is vastgelegd opnieuw in kaart – van de nanoseconden van beursnoteringen tot het vierjarige ritme van de politiek – tot veel langere geologische tijdschalen. Hierdoor maakte hij het mogelijk dat de menselijke geschiedenis het onderwerp werd van geologisch onderzoek. De menselijke geschiedenis werd een deel van de geschiedenis van de diepe aarde, een terrein dat vroeger bijna exclusief het domein van biologen en wetenschappers was" (Christian Schwägerl, 'The Anthropocene', 2014).

Hoewel we makkelijk met afgrijzen oordelen over democratisch verkozen leiders die, uit onkunde of corruptie, openlijk ontkennen dat klimaatverandering veroorzaakt wordt door de mens, zijn velen van ons (met een aantal bewonderenswaardige uitzonderingen) deelnemers in deze hypocrisie. De onderlinge verbondenheid van de systemen op onze planeet is in tegenstrijd met hoe we daarbinnen leven: private winst, natiestaten, rijksgrenzen – deze zaken worden irrelevant wanneer radioactieve gifwolken van Tsjernobyl de aardbol omcirkelen, wanneer het gat in de ozonlaag piekt boven Antarctica of de radioactieve neerslag van Fukushima blijft doorsijpelen in watervoorraden en oceaanstromingen.

Riddle of the Burial Grounds brengt kunstwerken samen die zich verhouden tot de geologische en menselijke tijd. Het zijn kunstwerken die speculatieve vormen en beelden geven aan periodes, tijdperken en tijdrekeningen; onmetelijke, onkenbare expansies van tijd die ons helpen buiten onszelf te kijken en buiten de wereld die we bewonen, en op die manier proberen de menselijke verbeelding te verruimen. De kunstenaars werkten rond unieke onderwerpen: door de mens gemaakte ruïnes en uitzonderlijke natuurfenomenen; opgegraven sites en uitgegraven mijnen; taal en haar grenzen; begrafenissen, ritueel, voorspelling, toekomst en radioactiviteit; hybriditeit tussen soorten; klimaatverandering, woestenijen en wildernissen.

Vele elementen uit de cultuurgeschiedenis, menhirs en megalithische sites over de hele wereld zijn poreuze betekenisdragers geworden: ze worden vereerd, gemonumentaliseerd; ze zijn religieus, boven-natuurlijk, functioneel en mythologisch gemaakt. Kunstcritica Lucy Lippard noemt deze eeuwenoude sites en beelden "talismannen, hulpmiddelen voor de herinnering, uitlaatkleppen voor de verbeelding, die niet kunnen worden gereguleerd; in bezit genomen of gemanipuleerd zoals zoveel hedendaagse kunst". Gekerfde of gegraveerde waarschuwingsstenen zoals de Japanse 'tsunami-stenen' zijn tragische monumenten geworden van wat vergeten is. Ze betekenen zoveel verschillende dingen voor de mensen die ze ontdekken en annexeren; ze lijken meer over ons te weten dan wij ooit over hen hopen te weten. Zoals Lippard schrijft: "Misschien tonen de prehistorische monumenten eenvoudigweg de behoefte van de mens om te communiceren."

Door het ongeremde delven, graven, ontginnen en bouwen van de mens, ontstaan nieuwe, toevallige vormen in het landschap: reusachtige wijzigingen door de industrie, monumenten van productie, minerale graven boven en onder de grond; een geleegde schoot van aarde en een bekrabd gezicht van steen. Groeven, mijnen, platgewalste heuvels en overstroomde valleien – ze hebben allemaal het aardoppervlak gewijzigd, als erfenis van industriële groei en ontwikkeling. De vraag naar het eigenaarschap van deze 'onderkant' brengt allerlei tegenstellingen naar voren in verband met landrechten, minerale rechten en het oppervlak van de aarde als juridische entiteit ten opzichte van wat eronder ligt.

We leven in een tijd waarin verantwoordelijkheid nemen voor de toekomst een onmiskenbare verplichting is geworden. Maar wat betekent 'lange termijn' echt? Hoever kunnen we echt in de toekomst kijken? Wat is menselijke tijd vergeleken met geologische tijd, of kosmische tijd? Wat betekent het om in een toekomst te denken die zo ver voorbij onze levenstijd ligt dat alleen al het idee van een

bevolking die deze planeet bewoont slechts speculatie is; waar taal geen gelijkenis zal vertonen met wat vandaag gesproken wordt, en waar de concrete overblijfselen van dit tijdperk in het beste geval vervallen sporen zijn? Welk verschil zal er zijn tussen wijzigingen aan de aarde door industrie of door kunstenaars? Kunnen we ons het heden voorstellen als een reeks tekens en betekenaars uit het diepe verleden: voortekens, waarschuwingen en boodschappen die de toekomstige bewoners van de planeet ten goede komen? Het gebaar van een kunstenaar van 40.000 jaar geleden kan tot ons spreken vanaf grotwanden. Maar wat betekent het om deze tijdelijke verbinding te vermenigvuldigen, om de mensheid te vragen zich niet alleen de toekomst voor te stellen, maar verantwoordelijk te handelen tegenover de bewoners van deze planeet over 240.000 jaar? Want dat is de levensduur van radioactief afval dat vandaag wordt geproduceerd: 'De halveringstijd van plutonium is 24.000 jaar. We beschouwen iets als verdwenen na tienmaal de halveringstijd, dus 240.000 jaar.' (Allison MacFarlane, voorzitter van de Amerikaanse Nucleaire Reguleringscommissie (US Nuclear Regulatory Commission) 2012-14, 'Containment', 2015).

Dit is de toxische erfenis van de bunkers, afvalkuilen en bassins die momenteel op een ontoereikende manier het radioactieve afval uit deze en de vorige eeuw herbergen. Sinds de verwoede productie van kernkoppen tijdens de Koude Oorlog en de ontwikkeling van nucleaire energie en krachtcentrales over de hele wereld heeft radioactief afval zich opgestapeld zonder haalbaar bergingsplan. Dit afval wacht in limbo op een oplossing, verplaatst van kortetermijn-opslag naar minder korte termijn, maar zonder oplossing voor de angstaanjagend ernstige situatie die dit giftige en gevaarlijke materiaal vormt voor de planeet. De taak om ervan af te raken is effectief overgelaten aan een meer geavanceerde en bekwame bevolking, een die het vermoedelijk kan beveiligen en isoleren van het leven op aarde. Maar naarmate de jaren voorbijgaan, wordt steeds duidelijker dat dit afvalmateriaal geen neutraliseringspotentieel heeft,

geen waterdichte oplossing voor opslag, geen omkeerbare chemie die onze problemen kan doen verdwijnen. En dus begraven we het. In een zoutmijn, in een spelonkachtige versterkte bunker diep in de aarde, waarvan we hopen dat de betonnen omsluiting het zal uithouden, en dat de eigenschappen van de omgeving – die om te beginnen de zoutafzettingen tot stand heeft gebracht – zal blijven verhinderen dat water binnendringt in zijn vergiftigde kamer.

Toen in New Mexico het bouwproject van de Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (een insluitingssite voor nucleair afval) van start ging, begon er eveneens een zoektocht naar de markeringen, symbolen, tekens of monumenten die het grote gevaar van de site zouden kunnen duidelijk maken aan die verre toekomst, aan een bevolking van de planeet die voorbij het bereik van onze kennis ligt, een tijdspanne "voorbij de maatschappelijke verbeelding" (Allison MacFarlane). Kunstenaars, ingenieurs, astrofysici en sciencefictionsschrijvers kwamen samen in teams en werden gevraagd om zich een voorstelling te maken van de verre toekomst, en van een markeringssysteem dat nodig is om de begraafplaats te markeren. Zich deze toekomst voorstellen betekent zich de ruïnes van het heden voorstellen, en zoals Brian Dillon schrijft: "De ruïnes staan er nog – maar waar staan ze voor? ... We vragen heel wat van ruïnes, en raden heel wat betekenis uit hun stilte" ('Ruin Lust', 2014).

Omgeven als we vandaag zijn door raadsels – rechtopstaande stenen, neolithische menhirs, megalithische structuren – bevatten deze eeuwenoude uitingen net zoveel mysteries als boodschappen. Of we nu proberen hun symboliek te decoderen of ze de tijd laten beschrijven door hun pure steenachtigheid, "ze vormen bovendien, ter plekke en op een bepaald moment in de ontwikkeling, een onomkeerbare snede in het weefsel van het universum. Net zoals fossiele afdrukken is dit merkteken, dit spoor, niet alleen een beeltenis, maar het ding zelf, gestabiliseerd door een wonder, dat tegenover zichzelf en tegenover de verborgen wetten van onze gedeelde

formatie getuigenis aflegt van waar de gehele natuur werd meege-
dragen" (Roger Caillois, 'Pierres', 1966).

De betekenis die velen, onder wie ook Roger Caillois, hebben
gelezen en zullen blijven lezen in stenen is zowel wetenschappelijk
als speculatief. Net zoals kunst en onze relatie ermee. Riddle of the
Burial Grounds zoekt naar betekenis via de objecten en artefac-
ten rondom ons, via gebaren en kunst; via betekenisvolle vormen,
rituelen, mythes, begravingen, opgravingen en de onveranderlijkheid
van voorwerpen, via dingen gezien als vanuit de toekomst en dingen
gemaakt als vanuit het verleden. Dit zijn de stenen die aanspoelen
aan de kust van onze dromen.

Tessa Giblin

Extra City Kunsthall, Antwerpen – maart 2016

(Eerdere versies van deze ideeën zijn gepubliceerd in Riddle of the Burial
Grounds, Project Arts Centre, Dublin 2015, en 'Hall of Half-Life', steirischer herbst
festival, Graz 2015.)



"Do not destroy these markers. These standing stones
mark an area once used to bury radioactive wastes.
These wastes give off invisible energy that can destroy
plants, animals and people. The rock and water in this
area may not look, feel or smell unusual but may be
poisoned. These markers were designed to last 10,000
years. Do not drill here. Do not dig here."

('Containment', a film by Peter Galison & Robb Moss)

We are drawn to objects, markers and ruins. We excavate, restore,
categorise, explore, conceive and create them. Earth is riddled with
signals that terrestrial timekeepers use to tell the story of our planet
while they carve up geological history. Whether rigorously evi-
denced or fantastically envisioned, change is upon us. The climate
has changed, the epoch has arguably changed, and our relationship
to time has changed. Riddle of the Burial Grounds is positioned within
a dramatic arc of geological history. Its protagonists are stories and
objects that resonate well beyond our human life-spans and heredi-
tary generations, arching into the deep past, while attempting to
envision the signals, languages, monuments or leftovers that might still
retain their communicative potential into the deep future.

We live in the era in which humans have become the dominant force
of change on this planet. When Paul Crutzen declared this epoch the
Anthropocene in an apparently off-the-cuff comment in a confer-
ence in Mexico in 2000, he 'effectively remapped the various
timescales in which our existence is recorded – from the nanosec-
onds of stock exchanges to the four-year rhythm of politics – to
much longer geological timescales. In doing so, he enabled human
history to become the subject of geological examination. Human
history became a part of deep earth history, an area that had previ-
ously been almost exclusively the realm of biologists and scientists'
(Christian Schwägerl, 'The Anthropocene', 2014).

Although it can be convenient to judge with horror the democratically elected officials and leaders who openly assert either ignorance or corruption when denying climate change is caused by humans, many of us (with noble exceptions) are participants in the new knowledge's hypocrisy. The interconnectedness of the planet's systems are at odds with how we live within it: private gain, nation states, empire borders – all of these things become irrelevant when toxic clouds from the Chernobyl fallout circle the globe, the hole in the ozone layer coalesces over Antarctica, or Fukushima's radioactive fallout continues to seep into water supplies and ocean currents.

Riddle of the Burial Grounds brings together artworks that measure themselves against geological and human time. They are artworks that give speculative forms and images to periods, epochs and eras: vast, unknowable expanses of time that help us to look outside of ourselves and the worlds we inhabit and, in so doing, attempt to stretch the possibilities of human imagination. Artists have situated works in or around various unique subjects: man-made ruins and extraordinary natural phenomena; excavated sites and empty-bellied mines; language and its limits; burial, ritual, forecasting, futures and radioactivity; interspecies hybridity; climate change, wastelands and wildernesses.

Core samples of cultural history, standing stones and megalithic sites around the world have become porous receptacles of meaning: projected onto, worshipped, monumentalised; made religious, sacrificial, supernatural, functional, and mythological. Lucy Lippard calls these ancient sites and images 'talismans, aids to memory, outlets for the imagination that can't be regulated, owned, or manipulated like so much contemporary art'. Carved or inscribed warning stones such as Japan's 'tsunami stones' have become tragic monuments to that which has been forgotten. Representing so many different things to the changing tides of inhabitants who discover and co-opt them, they seem to know more about us than we could ever hope to know

about them. As Lippard writes: 'Perhaps what the prehistoric stone monuments still communicate is simply people's need to communicate.'

Furious unearthing, excavation, mining and building create other, unintentional forms in the land they inhabit. These are the giant alterations of industry, monuments of production, mineral graves that are scattered above and below ground, with emptied wombs of earth and scabbled faces of rock. The question of ownership of this 'underneath' brings up all sorts of contradictions concerning land rights, mineral rights, and the surface of the earth as a separate juridical entity to that which lies beneath. Quarries, mines, bulldozed hills and flooded valleys – all have altered the face of the earth, as part of a legacy of industrial growth and development.

We are living in a time when taking responsibility for the future has become the resounding imperative of our age. But what does 'long-term' really mean? How far can we really peer into the future? What is human time when set against geological time, or cosmic time? What is it to think into a future so far beyond our lifetimes that the very idea of an inhabiting population of this planet is but speculation; where language would bear no resemblance to anything spoken today, and where the concrete remains of this epoch would be ruinous imprints at best? What difference would there be between earth alterations resulting from industry, and earthworks created by artists? Can we imagine the present as a series of signs and signifiers from the deep past: omens, warnings and messages to benefit the future inhabitants of the planet? An artist's gesture from 40,000 years ago may speak to us from the walls of caves. But what is it to multiply this temporal connection, to ask humanity to not just conceive of the future, but to act responsibly for the inhabitants of this planet 240,000 years from now? For this is the lifespan of radioactive waste produced today: 'The half-life of plutonium is 24,000 years. We consider something gone after 10 half-lives, so, 240,000 years.'

(Allison MacFarlane, Chair of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission 2012-14, 'Containment', 2015).

This is the toxic legacy of the bunkers, waste-pits and pools that are currently and inadequately housing the radioactive waste of this century and the last. Since the furious production of nuclear warheads during the Cold War, and the development of nuclear energy and power plants across the world, radioactive waste has been accumulating without a workable salvage plan. This is waste that waits in limbo for a solution, moved from short-term storage to less short-term, but with no resolution for the chillingly serious situation that this poisonous and hazardous material presents for the planet. Getting rid of it has effectively been left for a more advanced and capable population, one that can presumably secure and isolate it from life on earth. But as the years tick by it becomes increasingly apparent that this waste material has no neutralization potential, no fool-proof storage solution, no reversible chemistry that can make our problems go away. And so we bury it. In a salt mine, in a cavernous reinforced bunker deep inside the earth, hoping the concrete containment will hold, hoping the qualities of the environment that created the salt deposits in the first place will continue to prevent water from entering its poisoned chamber.

When the development of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (a containment site for nuclear waste) was launched in New Mexico, so too was a search for the markers, symbols, signs or monuments that could communicate the peril of the site to this deep future, to a population of the planet beyond the reach of our knowledge, a span of time "beyond societal imagination". (Allison MacFarlane). Artists, engineers, astro-physicists and science-fiction writers joined teams asked to conceive of the deep future, and a marking system needed to mark the burial site. To imagine this future is to imagine the ruin of the present, and as Brian Dillon writes, "The ruins are still standing – but what do they stand for?"... We ask a great deal of ruins, and divine

a lot of sense from their silence. ('Ruin Lust', 2014).

Surrounded as we are by present-day riddles – standing stones, Neolithic menhirs, megalithic structures – these ancient manifestations hold just as many mysteries as they do messages. Whether trying to decode their symbolism, or allowing them to describe time through their sheer stoniness, 'They provide moreover, taken on the spot and at a certain instant of its development, an irreversible cut made into the fabric of the universe. Like fossil imprints, this mark, this trace, is not only an effigy, but the thing itself stabilized by a miracle, which attests to itself and to the hidden laws of our shared formation where the whole of nature was borne along' (Roger Caillois, 'Pierres' 1966).

The meaning that many, including Roger Caillois, have read and will continue to read into stones is both scientific and speculative – much like art and our relationship to it. Significant form, ritual, mythologizing, burial, excavation, the immutability of objects, things seen as though from the future, things made as though from the past. Searching for meaning through objects and artefacts around us, searching for meaning through gesture and art. These are the preoccupations of Riddle of the Burial Grounds. These are the stones that wash up on the shores of our dreams.

Tessa Giblin

Extra City Kunsthall, Antwerp – March 2016

(Previous versions of these ideas were published with Riddle of the Burial Grounds, Project Arts Centre, Dublin 2015, and 'Hall of Half-Life', steirischer herbst festival, Graz 2015)

Riddle of the Burial Grounds

Hierna volgt meer uitleg bij de afzonderlijke kunstwerken in de tentoonstelling. De uitgebreidere Engelstalige teksten zijn van de hand van curator Tessa Giblin of van de kunstenaars zelf. De Nederlandstalige teksten zijn hierop gebaseerd en bieden een compacte introductie tot elk werk.



Below you will find further explanation about the individual works in the exhibition. The longer English texts are written by curator Tessa Giblin or the respective artists. The Dutch texts are based on these and provide a compact introduction to each work.

Lara Almarcegui

'Mineral Rights, Tveitvangen (Norway)', 2015

Single channel diaprojectie / Slide projection: 9'24"

Geproduceerd door / Produced by Leuphana Arts Program, Lüneburg & O & O Subsidy, CBK.

'Mineral Rights, Graz (Austria)', 2016

Single channel diaprojectie / Slide projection: 8'57"

In opdracht van / Commissioned by steirischer herbst 2015; Met de steun van / Supported by Project Arts Centre; O & O Subsidy; CBK; Mondriaan Fund

Lara Almarcegui trekt het idee van landeigendom door tot diep in de aarde, verticaal naar beneden. Ze vertelt ons dat wat zich onder Berlijn bevindt, grotendeels toebehoort aan Zweden, en dat een belangrijk deel van Ierland in bezit is van Zuid-Afrika. De kunstenaar verworft in 'Mineral Rights, Tveitvangen (Norway)' en 'Mineral Rights, Graz (Austria)' de minerale rechten over het ijzer dat zich diep onder de oppervlakte van een stuk land bevindt en wordt zo de eigenares van een deel van deze 'onderkant'. Het project was een grote uitdaging omdat minerale rechten normaal gezien niet worden aangekocht door individuen maar door (enorm grote) bedrijven. Het werk van Almarcegui is als een röntgenfoto: het verbeeldt het onzichtbare, dat wat we ons anders niet kunnen voorstellen.

The land beneath our feet is valued. It is traded, fought over, inherited, annexed, acquired, protected, conquered, purchased, defended and lost. For many cultures, the acquisition of land is a normal aspiration, either as a place to live or an asset to benefit from. For others, the very idea of real estate is at odds with their own concept of it, underpinning much more collaborative attitudes to the land and who its custodians might be. But what of the underneath? Lara Almarcegui lassos the idea of land ownership and slings our attention vertically down, deep into the earth. With

'Mineral Rights, Tveitvangen (Norway)' and 'Mineral Rights, Graz (Austria)', the artist acquired the mineral rights to iron which resides deep beneath the surface and, as an individual, has become an owner of part of this underneath. The concept was challenging to realise – mineral rights are generally acquired by companies, and these days, enormous ones. Almarcegui tells us that most of the underneath of Berlin is actually owned by Sweden, while a sizeable portion of Ireland is owned by South Africa. So what of the underneath of Austria and Norway? A series of slides document the land above her 'underneath'. It gives a short history of the area and its mining heritage before a deeper excursion into the geological age of the site and the history of extraction and miner right ownership. Lara Almarcegui's artworks are a little like x-rays: they create an image of something we wouldn't be able to envisage otherwise, whether this is through data collection, landscape photography, an action, or enormous accumulations of materials. By focusing on this unusual legislative relationship to the land, she tests both its strength and cohesion through an attempt to twist its purpose, all the time reminding us that territory is now a vertical concept too.

Stéphane Béna Hanly

'Length of a Legacy (Thomas Midgley)', 2015

Ongebakken klei, waterreservoir, water / Unfired clay, water tank, water
Courtesy de kunstenaar / the artist

De buste uit klei in de installatie van Stéphane Béna Hanly is die van Thomas Midgley, een wetenschapper die we nauwelijks nog bij naam kennen maar die de chloorfluorkoolstoffen (CFK's) uitvond. Pas dertig jaar na zijn dood werd het verwoestende effect van de CFK's op de ozonlaag ontdekt. Ondergedompeld in water – naast ozon een andere vitale levensbron – begint Hanly's beeld van klei onmiddellijk te bruisen en op te lossen, gelijkaardig aan het proces van verval waaraan alle monumenten onderhevig zijn: gerealiseerd om een idee of een persoon te vereeuwigen, maar vernietigd door

lucht, water en menselijke activiteit. Het geleidelijk eroderende monument van Hanly wordt zo een allegorie van wetenschappelijk streven, entropisch verval en een reflectie over de menselijke hang naar onsterfelijkheid.

The figure of Thomas Midgley, represented in Stéphane Béna Hanly's slowly disintegrating bust, is unlikely to be recognised. His name is not remembered nor are his facial features remarkable. Yet the work of Thomas Midgley has touched all of our lives. As a pioneering scientist and the unwittingly catastrophic inventor of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), Midgley has "had more impact on the atmosphere than any other single organism in Earth's history" (J. McNeill, 'Something New Under the Sun', 2001). It wasn't until thirty years after Midgley's death that Paul Crutzen, a Nobel prize-winning chemist (who is also credited for coining the term the Anthropocene), discovered the devastating effect that CFCs were having on the ozone layer – one of the most vital systems for permitting life on earth. Millions of years in the making, the ozone layer made it possible for humanity to exist in the first place. Stéphane Béna Hanly's clay bust of Midgley is mindful of the monumentalising trophies of human achievement and endeavour. Submerging the clay figure in water (another vital life-permitting substance) submits it to a state of bubbling, eroding and sliding dispersal from the moment it comes into contact. This is a process that Béna Hanly sees in monuments all around us – decaying things created to immortalise an idea or a person, and beginning their process of destruction from that moment forth by air, water, natural destruction or human activity. One of the most frustrating arguments put forward by climate change sceptics is posited around the ego: that humans are arrogant to believe that their actions could have an impact on something so vast as nature. Stéphane Béna Hanly shows us a person who has had such an impact, memorialised as one would a hero. The gradually eroding monument becomes an allegory of scientific endeavour, entropic decay and a reflection on cultural desire for memorialisation. As the clay breaks down and the murky water finally settles, we will be left with a changed landscape inside these tanks: not designed, not planned, but the unpredicted by-product of what was originally created.

Rossella Biscotti

'Title One: The Tasks of the Community', 2012

Gegoten lood, gerecycleerd uit de voormalige kerncentrale Ignalina, Litouwen / Cast lead recycled from former Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, Lithuania
Het project werd mogelijk gemaakt dankzij / The project has been made with thanks to CAC Vilnius, Manifesta 9 & Mondriaan Fund; Courtesy de kunstenaar en / the artist and Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam

De ruwe, geschakeerde tegels van Rossella Biscotti werden gemaakt uit het lood dat de kunstenaar verwierf op een publieke veiling na de sloop van de kerncentrale van Ignalina in Litouwen. Die reactor, vergelijkbaar met die van Tsjernobyl, stamde nog uit het Sovjet-tijdperk en de ontmanteling was een van de voorwaarden voor de toetreding van Litouwen tot de Europese Unie. In Biscotti's werk lijkt een spoor van radioactiviteit te blijven spoken in het lood dat oorspronkelijk gebruikt werd als schild tegen de straling: radioactiviteit is voor niet-wetenschappers immers een moeilijk voor te stellen, ongrijpbaar, abstract concept. Dit kunstwerk maakt deel uit van haar bredere serie 'Euratom' (verwijzend naar de gelijknamige European Atomic Energy Community, die als doel heeft nucleaire energie binnen de EU te faciliteren).

The mottled surfaces of Rossella Biscotti's lead parquet lack the perfection of industrially made tiles. Hand-made and rough around the edges, 'Title One: The Tasks of the Community' is made from lead that the artist purchased at public auction during the decommissioning of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant in Lithuania. Ignalina's Soviet-era reactor was similar to that of Chernobyl's and the decommission was part of an agreement surrounding Lithuania's accession to the EU. Previously employed as a radiation shield at the plant, the lead feels haunted by the residue of radiation. Radiation is in many ways an unimaginable thing. We can see evidence of it on living things, and we can count levels of it with a Geiger

counter. Yet the very actuality of ionising radiation – where radiation carries enough energy to liberate electrons from atoms or molecules – contains a very strong degree of structural abstraction ungraspable to many non-scientists. Rossella Biscotti's artwork is part of a wider series which draws its name from the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) founded by the Euratom Treaty of 1957 (at the same time as the European Economic Area). Euratom exists to develop a specialist market for nuclear energy distribution within the member states of the EU, in order to replace dependence on finite coal and oil resources. As we peer deeper and deeper into the future for which we are now responsible, the language of forms become ever more intriguing and elusive – even these most ubiquitous tiles, unmistakable in their weight, which may have long been right beneath our feet.

Simon Boudvin

'5 PILIERS (Ribecourt)', 2005

Foto / Photograph

Gecoproduceerd door / Co-produced by steirischer herbst 2015 & Project Arts Centre, Dublin.

'CONCAVE 05 (Cazals)', 2010; 'CONCAVE 06 (Poncé)', 2012;

'CONCAVE 07 (Ruillé)', 2012; 'CONCAVE 04 (Gagny)', 2007

Multi-exposure foto's / Photographs

Gecoproduceerd door / Co-produced by steirischer herbst 2015 & Project Arts Centre, Dublin.

De grotten en mijnen in het werk 'CONCAVES' van Simon Boudvin lijken speciaal te zijn verlicht en opengesteld voor publiek. Het tegendeel is echter waar. De kunstenaar installeerde TL-buizen op de bodem van de grotten, belichtte een onderdeel van de ruimte en nam een analoge foto. Daarna legde hij de TL-buizen een meter

verder, herhaalde het proces en gebruikte daarbij keer op keer dezelfde foto, totdat laag over laag de hele ruimte was vastgelegd. Wanneer we het beeld dat hieruit ontstond ondersteboven tentoongesteld zien, worden deze bedrieglijk eenvoudige constructies erg complex, met hun vreemde holtes en grillige leegtes. Ook '5 PILIERS' is misleidend: het is geen Neolithische structuur, maar de top van een heuvel die is geërodeerd en ingestort in de verlaten mijn eronder. Hoe zullen deze hedendaagse constructies geïnterpreteerd worden door toekomstige onderzoekers?

Simon Boudvin takes us into the belly of the earth. 'CONCAVE', his photographs of French mines and caves, are borne of a documentary desire, capturing images of places that are otherwise hidden from our eyes and our consciousness. As he says of the material practice of architecture: "To build a space somewhere, you need to create another one, from where you extract the material. Each building has a hidden sister. One space is wanted, designed, capitalised. The other one is waste." When presented in the gallery context, these subterranean 'significant others' appear developed, perhaps opened to tourism, strange underground places that for some reason have been lit for the public. They are in fact quite the opposite. The artist lays metre after metre of fluorescent tubing on the floors of the cave, turns on the generator, lights a section and exposes his film by taking a photo on a medium format camera. He repeats the process and re-exposes the same film again and again until the whole underground composition is captured. Flipped upside down on the gallery wall, these beguilingly simple constructions suddenly become much more complicated to the gaze, not with the trickery and delusion of after-effects, but with the implications of the excavations and the vast voids they create. The sites extend low and wide into the earth and, as the earth changes (as we know it will), the deep paths of their excavation are likely to work their way to the surface. '5 PILIERS (Ribecourt)' is similarly not the tableau or Neolithic structure it appears to be: it is the crest of a hill, collapsed over time and after erosion into the belly of the abandoned mine beneath it. As Boudvin says,

"This object can be considered as a monument to the work of miners and constructors, a monument born as an accident: half natural, half cultural." We are thus reminded of the cairns, standing stones, and Megalithic structures that foreshadow our architectural histories. Whether intentionally built or the unintended results of mining, digging and climate change, we get a glimpse of how our contemporary structures might appear to the researchers who try to make sense of the objectives and decisions of those whose time was the Anthropocene.

Mariana Castillo Deball

'Mschatta-Fassade', 2014

Textielverf op katoen, metalen rail, geluid / Textile paint on cotton fabric, metal track, sound; segment of 5.5x22m

Geproduceerd door / Produced by Hamburger Bahnhof

Courtesy de kunstenaar / The artist, Kurimanzutto & Barbara Wien

De façade van Qasr al-Mshatta, een ruïne uit 744, werd in 1903 ontmanteld en over land en zee getransporteerd naar het Pergamon Museum in Berlijn, als geschenk van de Ottomaanse sultan Abdul Hamid II aan de Duitse keizer Wilhelm II. Mariana Castillo Deball interpreteert de historische context van de façade in een serie audio-opnamen die inspelen op kwesties als cultureel imperialisme, de intriges van de kunstmarkt en destructieve archeologie. Ze verweeft historisch bewijsmateriaal met speculatieve en artistieke ideeën en creëert zo "biografieën van dingen". Aanvullend op de geluidsfragmenten vertaalt Castillo Deball de façade naar een enorm stoffen doek dat wordt gedrapeerd als een gordijn. Alles aan het materiaal is in strijd met het object dat het vertegenwoordigt: doorzichtig, delicaat en verplaatsbaar versus ondoordringbaar, massief en onbeweeglijk.

Today, the façade of Qasr al-Mshatta is on permanent display in Berlin's Pergamon Museum. A ruin dating from 744, it was dismantled from its home of origin in 1903, travelling across the Jordanian desert, then over land, sea and river, until finally reaching the museum island in Berlin, where it was presented as a gift from the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II to the German Kaiser Wilhelm II. Mariana Castillo Deball's interpretation of the historical context of the façade is played out in a series of audio recordings – re-enactments of written articles, new interviews, and a musical score through spoken word. In the audio series, she touches on issues of cultural imperialism, vandalism, the machinations of the art market, conservation, the appropriation of cultural artefacts and destructive archaeology among a prism of other issues. The artist's approach to historical narrative is both rigorously substantiated and speculative – she weaves together historical evidence and verifiable information with interpretative ideas or artistic rendering, creating in her words 'biographies of things'. One of the sound recordings presents a spoken-word choir who perform a score that is composed of the names of the shapes encountered in the façade. The architectural ruin that is the subject of this project has been represented in an enormous curtain, filling the void of Extra City. Translucent, and lightly painted with an image of the façade's patterning, the curtain follows the outline of the original. Everything about the curtain's materiality is contradictory to the object it represents: the curtain is translucent where the façade is dense; it is delicate where the façade is solid; it is moveable where the façade is not. Together with the audio recordings, Castillo Deball has created an experience that is like a window through time. As opposed to representing the façade, the work evokes instead the multiplicity of associations and meanings associated with such a complex and contested artefact.

Dorothy Cross

'Stalactite', 2010

Single channel HD video; met geluid / With sound, 5'22"

Courtesy de kunstenaar / the artist & Kerlin Gallery, Dublin

In een natuurlijke grot in County Clare in West-Ierland bevindt zich de grootste stalactiet ter wereld, zeven meter lang. Zijn aanhechtspunt aan het plafond van de grot is slechts dertig vierkante centimeter groot, wat zijn verschijning indrukwekkend en tegelijk fragiel maakt. Onder de stalactiet plaatste Dorothy Cross een jonge koorknaap, op de rand van volwassenheid, die met een delicate stem niet-linguïstische tonen zingt, begeleid door het druppelen van het water op de kalksteen. Cross creëert een groot contrast tussen het prille leven van de jongen, symbool voor onze korte menselijke levensduur, en de overlevingstijd van de 500.000 jaar oude stalactiet. In de verre toekomst zal taal misschien niet meer in dezelfde vorm bestaan zoals we die nu kennen. De klanken van de koorknaap kunnen gezien worden als een voorbode van een nieuwe taal, met een andere ritmiek en logica.

'Pol an Ionain' is situated near Doolin in County Clare in the West of Ireland. Undiscovered until 1952, it is a natural cave and home to one of the world's largest stalactites. Formed over the ages by the accumulative dripping of water and sedimentation of calcium, this great limestone ribbon is attached to the ceiling of the cave by a mere 0.3m² surface, making it all the more impressive and vulnerable in its appearance. Dorothy Cross has made a film that is deliberately intended for a large, voluminous space. Beneath the 'Great Stalactite' as it is known, stands a boy. At the artist's request, this young chorister from Ennis, County Clare uses his voice and the control he has over it to perform non-linguistic sounds. Dorothy Cross describes the boy's performance as that of 'a baby bird

finding its voice', ringing out in the cave, accompanied only by the gradual dripping of liquid on limestone. The stalactite is estimated to be 7m in length, and approximately 500,000 years old, while the cavernous chamber is thought to be 2 million years old. The young boy, whose delicate vocal chords fill the cave with sound, is on the brink of physical change. He is evolving into manhood, a stark reminder of youth and inevitable ageing that marks humanity's fleeting moment, yet pales into insignificance beneath the awesome and beautiful evidence of time that is the Great Stalactite. When thinking about deep time, we know that language in the future will not bear any resemblance to those languages spoken today. There may not even be spoken language that resembles the forms and consonants, rhythmic structures and logic that is used in the many various forms around us. The chorister's soundings thus prefigure this age, bringing ideas of language, human time and geological time into an awesome and humbling dialogue.

Regina de Miguel

'The last term that touches the sight (ANXIETY)', 2010

'The last term that touches the sight (ISOLATION)', 2010

Digitale tekeningen / Digital drawings

In opdracht van / Commissioned by Project Arts Centre, Dublin.

Courtesy de kunstenaar / The artist & Maisterra Valbuena, Madrid.

Regina de Miguel combineert twee representaties van gebergtes; een foto van een ijsberg, die vaak wordt genoemd als metafoor voor gevoelens van wanhoop, twijfel en eenzaamheid, en een digitale, bergachtige grafiek, gebaseerd op de Europese cijfers voor zelfmoord en depressie. De analoge foto van de ijsberg dateert uit een tijd waarin nog geen twijfel bestond over de authenticiteit van een beeld. De ijsbergen zelf zijn echter al lang van deze planeet verdwenen: de tijdelijkheid van hun bestaan wordt benadrukt in de context van onze huidige tijd, waarin een drijvende ijsberg niet zo-

zeer meer herinnert aan legendarische poolreizen, maar eerder aan de smeltende ijskap als gevolg van de opwarming van de aarde. Dit beeld uit het verleden wordt door de kunstenaar overdekt door een beeld dat verwijst naar een digitale toekomst waarin beelden worden gegenereerd door computers.

Regina de Miguel's two works for Riddle of the Burial Grounds are collages. In each, three differently formed layers are compressed into an image which relates to time and form, speaking as much to the subconscious as to the alert mind. Central to Regina de Miguel's practice is data. She collects it, uses it, analyses it, and even tricks it. The data present in 'The last term that touches the sight (ISOLATION) & (ANXIETY)' is drawn from Eurostat, the compiled statistics of therapy sessions with people experiencing feelings of depression, despair, anxiety, grief and isolation. When undergoing therapy for these emotional states, and when asked to describe a state of mind, the iceberg is often invoked. Alone in the landscape, cast adrift, the iceberg's chiselled beauty is buoyed by a bulking menace – the invisible-to-the-naked-eye floating mountain that drifts beneath the waters. De Miguel has layered over this mountainous image another ranging scene, which shows that the data behind this computer generated statistical map is also a maker of images. Although she doesn't provide the co-ordinates or tell us what the graph represents, the implication is clear, charged by the text emblazoned below: ISOLATION, ANXIETY. Complete with lens debris and reminiscent of Shackleton-era polar voyages, the image of the iceberg clearly originates in the adolescent years of photography. It is a photograph taken in a time when the authenticity of an image was taken for granted. Unlike her landlocked cousins that endure as standing stones and Neolithic structures, these particular icebergs are well and truly gone from the planet. This reminder of impermanence is heightened by the time we live in, when the threat of a floating iceberg reminds us not only of legendary ocean liner disasters but, more pressingly, of melting polar caps. CO₂ emissions may be hard to visualise, and the effect of a 2 °C change of climate difficult to get the measure of, but there's nothing unclear about an iceberg floating in waters

in which it shouldn't be. This image from the past is then overlaid by a suggestion of the digital future, where the broad notion of an image will inevitably become more and more interwoven with algorithms and data interpretation, created with, if not by, computerised systems. Taken as a whole, each collage presents us with a singular emotional state (similar as they are, in the general family of feelings). As the artist writes, (there are no confines left to be explored, and determined symptoms – those that in great part are the principle of our singularity – don't find a specific place in our imagery. Facing this "end of geography" we see that even more bottomless regions, human latitudes extend to be mapped). Christian Schwägerl writes in 'The Anthropocene' (2014), 'In the Holocene, there was always a "big world out there", the "great outdoors", an infinite natural world that seemed inexhaustible... But, in the Anthropocene there is only "the great inside", jointly shaped by each one of us in everyday life... We are not separate from our environment'.

Mikala Dwyer


'Underlay', 2016

Acryl op hout / Acrylic on wood

In opdracht van / Commissioned by Extra City Kunsthall, 2016

Verschillende strak gescheiden kleuren in metallic verf omcirkelen de sokkels van Mikala Dwyer, zodat een gelaagde doorsnede van een klif of een steengroeve lijkt te ontstaan. Stratigrafie is de aardwetenschap die dit soort sedimentatielagen onderzoekt en op basis daarvan geologische tijdperken onderverdeelt. Het zijn dus stratigrafen die zullen oordelen of het 'Antropoceen' al dan niet als een echte geologische tijd kan worden bestempeld (het 'Antropoceen' is een relatief recent begrip dat het huidige tijdperk benoemt waarin het klimaat en de atmosfeer de gevolgen onder vinden van menselijke activiteit, als opvolger van het 'Holoceen').

Dwyer creëert hier een visualisatie van deze complexe en betwiste sedimentatielagen. Haar sokkels dienen bovendien als voetstuk voor de zouten bekkens van Ruth E. Lyons.



The metallic painting that extends across numerous plinths was inspired by a geology text book that the artist was given by a friend when working with an extensive rock collection. Resembling a cross-section of strata that could be seen on a cliff-face or quarry, the painting encircles each plinth with jagged sections of colour. Named after these differentiated strata, stratigraphy is the business of studying the layers of sedimentation beneath us and, as strata are markers of time, it becomes the job of stratigraphers to divide up geological time. Thus the idea of the Anthropocene is theirs to debate. (The Anthropocene Working Group is scheduled to meet in mid-2016. Submitting evidence to prove that the Anthropocene is a true geologic epoch, the case will then be reviewed by the International Commission on Stratigraphy later in 2016). Known for her sculptural arrangements and spatial installation, Mikala Dwyer here creates a visualisation of this complex and contested sedimentary evidence. But it is also a support structure to present the work of another artist in the exhibition, Ruth E. Lyons. Growing from the relationship that formed between the two while Dwyer's exhibition 'Panto Collapsar' toured around Ireland, the plinths hold aloft Lyons' salt bowls, visualising the depth of rock and sediment that bore the salt deposits she carves into.

Harun Farocki


'Transmission (Übertragung)', 2007

Single channel installatie / Installation, DigiBeta, colour, 43'00"

'Inextinguishable Fire (Nicht löschesbares Feuer)', 1969

16 mm, zwart-wit / black/white, 25'00"

'Transmission' van Harun Farocki bestudeert de sterke band van de mens met objecten en monumenten. De film toont hoe gedenktekens onvermijdelijk worden aangeraakt. Het zijn tastbare maar vergankelijke omhulsels die onze collectieve geschiedenis in zich dragen en meenemen naar de toekomst. Farocki's tweede film in de tentoonstelling, 'Inextinguishable Fire', is een zeldzaam theateraankomstwerk in zijn oeuvre. Gemaakt in de schaduw van de Vietnamoorlog, is het nog steeds relevant in onze hedendaagse wereld vol gemanipuleerde berichtgeving en politieke verdeeldheid. In een napalm laboratorium en een wapenfabriek portretteert de film zowel de leiders als de arbeiders. "Als we je beelden van napalm slachtoffers tonen, zal je je blik willen afwenden. Je zal je ogen sluiten voor de beelden. Daarna zal je ze sluiten voor de herinnering. Je zal ze sluiten voor de feiten. En dan voor de hele context."



Harun Farocki's 'Transmission' is a moving study of humanity's intense relationship to objects, memorials and ideas. Throughout the film, Farocki visits various monuments and memorials around the world – both concrete and immaterial – sites that people appropriate, make pilgrimage to and, inevitably, touch. From the US memorial to the American War on Vietnam, to a Munich church and the footstep of the Devil, to a monument in the Buchenwald concentration camp, Farocki focuses on the intense interaction between people and monuments, witnessing the transmission that might occur when flesh is pressed against stone. The title of the work points to the transfer of meaning from one vessel to another, and the variety

of forms he shows are unique in their representative characteristics: hard-edged minimal structures; worn away symbols; figurative representations; functional objects; monuments evolving out of myth. They are repositories – places which hold our collective or idiosyncratic histories, but which store up their meaning and pass it on to future generations. Yet in doing so, they can also absolve us of the responsibility and burden of remembering. Towards the end of the film, from a bypass overlooking a busy monument, we witness one of the most poignant and moving memorials of the film. One by one and with a sudden synchronicity, the traffic flow comes to a halt and the drivers exit their vehicles. On the usually packed motorway, there is no movement but for the drivers who shield their eyes as they gaze forward in unison. This annual 2-minute memorial for those lost in the holocaust creates a 2-minute monument of humanity, transmitting a collective action. It is the only study of Farocki's film that lacks a concrete object at the centre, yet might have the potential to outlive all of the other objects and monuments. In the tradition of oral histories and inherited wisdom, the fact that becomes a myth that becomes a ritual stands to endure well beyond the material deposits of man. Farocki's second piece in the exhibition, 'Inextinguishable Fire', is a rare work of speculative fiction and theatrical re-enactment in his oeuvre. Made in the shadow of the American War on Vietnam, it is just as relevant today in our world of media obscurity and political compartmentalisation. Set within a napalm-lab and munitions factory, the film portrays both the leaders of a corporation and its followers, with the followers (the workers) deluded as to the true nature of their work. The film narrates, '(1) A major corporation is like a construction set. It can be used to put together the whole world. (2) Because of the growing division of labour, many people no longer recognize the role they play in producing mass destruction. (3) That which is manufactured in the end is the product of the workers, students, and engineers.' 'Inextinguishable Fire' is a stark reminder of the manipulation that can be wrought upon a population from whom the truth is obscured. 'If we show you pictures of napalm burns, you'll close your eyes. First you'll close your eyes to the pictures. Then you'll close your eyes to the memory. Then you'll close your eyes to the facts. Then you'll close your eyes to the entire context' (from 'Inextinguishable Fire').

Geoffrey Farmer

'Krampus, When Sweeping With Your Cosmic Broom, Sweep Us Out Of Our Mouldy Ruts.', 2015-16

71 bezems uit Graz, geprinte nieuwsartikelen, notities, gedichten, teksten, touw, spieën, Krampus marionet / 71 street brooms from Graz, printed news articles, notes, poems, texts, rope, cleats, Krampus marionette
Geproduceerd door / Produced by steirischer herbst festival, Graz; Ontwikkeld en gesteund door / Developed and supported by Artangel, UK.

Het begin is altijd moeilijk. Er wordt zelfs gesuggereerd dat er nooit één is geweest. Sommigen beweren dat er een begin was maar dat er nooit een einde komt. Sommigen benadrukken dat er alleen middens zijn, terwijl anderen enkel schrijven en spreken over een einde (DONDERSLAG). In de purana's, een oude Hindoetekst, wordt het universum beschreven als cyclisch: het schift gedurende 4 320 000 000 jaar, slaapt dan, wordt wakker en begint opnieuw. Dit schijnbaar onbegrijpelijke en excentrieke idee komt overeen met enkele hedendaagse wetenschappelijke theorieën over de omvang van het universum. Zo zou het ons 410 000 000 000 jaar kosten om aan lichtsnelheid te reizen van de ene naar de andere zichtbare kant van het universum. En zelfs dan, door zijn continue uitbreiding, is het mogelijk dat we nooit de rand bereiken. Misschien is het eenvoudiger om te denken over de oorsprong als een beslist feit – we hebben dan alleen een vlag, belgerinkel of vuurwerk nodig om het te definiëren. De onvoorstelbare omvang wordt dan afgebakend door het flikkeren van lichten, schudden van handen, openen van gordijnen, geweerschoten, kussen, grafstenen, kabaal, gebeden, deurgeklop en het snakken naar adem.

- Geoffrey Farmer, Antwerpen, maart 2016

Beginnings are tricky. In fact, there is speculation that there hasn't ever really been one. Some say there was a beginning but there will be no end. Some insist there are only middles, while others write and speak only of the end (CLAP OF THUNDER). In the Puranas, an ancient Hindu text, the universe is described as cyclical, blinking for 4,320,000,000 years and then sleeping, awaking and beginning again. This seemingly incomprehensible and fantastical idea matches some scientific theories about our current understanding of its size. For example, it would take us 410,000,000,000 years to travel at the speed of light from this spot to the edge of the visible universe. And even then, because of its continual expansion, it is possible we may never reach its edge. Maybe it is easier to think of beginnings as declarations—and one only need stake a flag, ring a bell or light fireworks to define them. The unimaginable vastness is then punctuated by the blinking of lights on, lights off, handshakes, rising curtains, gunshots, kisses, tombstones, crashes, prayers, knocks on doors and gasps of air.

- Geoffrey Farmer, Antwerp, March 2016

Peter Galison & Robb Moss

'Containment', 2015
Film, 80'00", loop

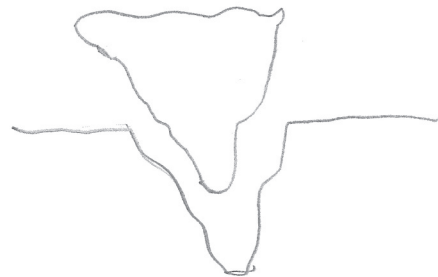
Elk nucleair wapen dat ooit gemaakt werd en elke watt kernenergie laat een spoor van radioactief afval achter dat de komende vierhonderd generaties zal meegaan. We begraven het afval diep onder de grond, waar het ons voorlopig geen schade zal toebrengen, maar hoe waarschuwen we toekomstige generaties voor dit gevaar? De film 'Containment' van Peter Galison en Robb Moss werd opgenomen op drie locaties: in het kernwapencomplex Savannah River in South Carolina, in de begraafplaats voor kernwapens in Carlsbad, New Mexico, en in Fukushima, Japan. De film – deels beschouwend essay, deels beeldroman – onderzoekt op welke manieren de mens

omgaat met het huidige probleem en hoe hij zich de toekomst tracht voor te stellen. Welke monumenten en legendes kunnen we construeren om met onze nakomelingen te communiceren?

The ancient Tsunami Stones of Japan are a haunting reminder of the way in which fundamental messages from humankind drift into obscurity over time and with the evolution of language. In the wake of Japan's devastating 2011 earthquake, an enormous sea-borne wave crashed against shores and over high-water lines with terrifying speed and power. Many thousands of people were lost in that catastrophe, many more displaced. Encircling the island of Japan, the tsunami stones had been set in place by ancient ancestors to warn future generations of the peril of building beneath the level of these markers. In some areas of the country the warning was heeded, the meaning of the now largely indecipherable markings passed on by the elders down through generations. In other areas their meaning was forgotten, grown over in the wild or disappeared entirely. The second catastrophe to hit Japan after the 2011 earthquake was the ensuing tsunami's impact on the Fukushima Nuclear Plant's ability to provide cooling water to the reactors and waste storage pools. Without the fresh water needed to cool the reactor towers, the plant went into meltdown, releasing radioactive material into the atmosphere and environment, an action of still immeasurable consequence to local, national and global communities and ecologies. The Fukushima meltdown and its immediate evacuation took place while Peter Galison and Robb Moss were researching and filming two other nuclear sites: the Savannah River nuclear weapons plant in South Carolina (USA) and the weapons waste burial site in Carlsbad, New Mexico. 'Containment' presents us with one of humanity's most hypocritical relationships with time. It charts these three sites: the first of radioactive disaster; the second a clean-up zone of radioactive pollution; the third a long-term containment facility, a site called the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. The radioactive waste created as a result of nuclear weapons production, and later in enormous quantities by nuclear power plants, has never had a long-term strategy in place to contain it safely from the population and the environment. In ad-

dressing this problem, time itself takes on a whole new dimension. "The half-life of plutonium is 24,000 years. We consider something gone after 10 half-lives, so, 240,000 years," says Allison MacFarlane, Chair of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission 2012-14. The WIPP site in Carlsbad, New Mexico, was selected as the destination for America's nuclear waste, in the hope that its natural properties of large salt deposits would help to isolate the waste from water and erosion. The questions then arise: when conceiving of the safety of this planet into the vast future, what kinds of warning systems and markers might be needed to communicate the peril of what lies beneath? What kind of material could possibly endure across this depth of time? How can memory be enshrined in each generation? How can we protect the future inhabitants of the planet from a catastrophic exploration dig that could end life in their environment? These questions also strike at the core of contemporary art — how do objects, gestures, monuments and ideas communicate? And how can we act with respect for a period of time we can barely conceive of?

Peter Galison's text 'The Half-Life of Story' in the book 'Hall of Half-Life' available at the bookshop, gives a detailed account of the historical and conceptual implications of this research.



Tracy Hanna

'Holes', 2015

Latex, vuil, variabele afmetingen / Latex, dirt, dimensions variable

Onderdelen. Verdomde onderdelen. Gesekste delen. Kwetsende delen. Ingevoegde delen. Delen in wording. Rakende delen. Opwindende delen. Innemende delen. Verloren delen. Gebruikte delen. Voelbare delen. Voedende delen. Inleidende delen. Proevende delen. Ontbrekende delen. Verslindende delen. Absorberende delen.

- Tracy Hanna, Antwerpen, maart 2016

Parts of. Fucking parts of. Sexing parts of. Hurting parts of. Inserting parts of. Becoming parts of. Touching parts of. Exciting parts of. Engaging parts of. Losing parts of. Using parts of. Including parts of. Feeling parts of. Feeding parts of. Enacting parts of. Tasting parts of. Missing parts of. Engorging parts of. Absorbing parts of.

- Tracy Hanna, Antwerp, March 2016

Mikhail Karikis

'The Tectonic Unquiet', 2013 – 15

Geluidsinstallatie / Sound installation

In opdracht van / Commissioned by steirischer herbst 2015

De 'duivelsvallei' is een natuurlijk vulkaangebied in Toscane waar energie wordt gewonnen uit de geothermische dampen die opstijgen van onder het aardoppervlak. Mikhail Karikis werkt hier al jaren aan zijn veelzijdige project 'The Tectonic Unquiet'. Zijn onderzoek focust op de ontvolking van de dorpen als gevolg van de automatisering van de energie-industrie in deze regio, die vandaag wordt beheerst door een web van kronkelende pijpleidingen en sissende geluiden. Karikis' complexe en gedetailleerde opnames van deze onderaardse activiteit werden verwerkt in een nieuwe geluidsinstallatie, bevestigd rondom de centrale wenteltrap in Extra City. 'The Tectonic Unquiet' zoekt zijn weg tot diep in de aarde en brengt de verraderlijke, oncontroleerbare en indrukwekkende klanken van schuivende mineraalmassa's en dampen aan de oppervlakte.

The geothermal area of the Devil's Valley in Tuscany is a unique natural environment where energy is harvested from the evaporating steam of hot granite rocks that lie unusually close to the surface. A place of volcanic activity for centuries, its steaming vents and geothermal pools are said to have inspired some of the most impressive 'visions' in Dante Alighieri's 'Inferno'. Mikhail Karikis has been working with this environment for many years, producing the multifaceted project 'The Tectonic Unquiet'. The depopulation of the villages in the Devil's Valley region as a result of the automation of the energy industry has been at the heart of Karikis' research and thinking. Snaked with pipes and hissing with sound, the site itself is an incredibly visceral environment that gives a sense of the sonic landscape beneath the surface. The sounds of pressure, of cracking and whistling, capture the intense energy deep within the bowels of the earth. This is energy of significant force.

In its constant drive to reach the surface, the geothermal energy in this region alone accounts for 10% of global supply. Yet it also possesses a catastrophic intensity – a vast lake in the nearby Lago Vecchienna rests in a mammoth crater that was formed by a volcanic explosion in the twelfth century. Mikhail Karikis, whose work is known in video installation, photography and objects, has been working in the field of sound for some time. Exquisitely complex and detailed, his recordings of the subterranean activity in the Devil's Valley are edited into a new sound installation, and installed around the spiralling staircase that connects the ground floor and first floor of Extra City. Following the coiled path of the deep drilling that routinely inspects the ground underfoot, 'The Tectonic Unquiet' exposes the treacherous, uncontrollable and beautiful sounds of this shifting mass of minerals and vapour deep beneath the surface of the earth.

Sam Keogh

'Four fold', 2015

Mixed media

Geproduceerd door / Produced by steirischer herbst 2015 &

Extra City Kunsthal; Met de steun van / Supported by Culture Ireland

De 'Old Croghan Man', het centrale beeld in Sam Keoghs installatie, is waarschijnlijk meer dan 2 000 jaar oud. Het is één van de zeer goed geconserveerde veenliken die werden gevonden in Noord-Europa. Keoghs fascinatie voor het tentoonstellen van historische lichamen gaat terug op een bezoek aan het British Museum, waar bezoekers via een digitale reconstructie een Egyptisch lichaam gedetailleerd konden dissecteren. In 'Four Fold' toont Keogh dat de representatie van een object effectiever kan zijn dan het voorwerp zelf. Tijdens de performance op de openingsavond activeert Keogh delen van de installatie en verbindt deze op een metaforische of letterlijke manier met jeugdherinneringen. Zo initieert hij een keten van representaties, interpretaties en filters.

The Old Croghan Man, whose image is the centrepiece of Sam Keogh's installation 'Four fold', is thought to be more than 2,000 years old. He is one of the bog bodies that have been found across Northern European lands, in the most concentrated quantities across Denmark, Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Ireland. Found in peat bog, these bodies are pickled by peat's highly acidic makeup, with remarkable details of skin and organs preserved. As a specimen, figures such as the Old Croghan Man are conscripted to provide clues to humanity's cultural and societal development; their diet is analysed from the content of their stomachs; their conditions of labour deduced from the conditions of their nails. The Old Croghan Man resides in the National Museum of Ireland, but Sam Keogh's feelings of disturbance surrounding the display of ancient bodies originated on a visit to the British Museum with his mother. In Keogh's frenetic, disjointed stream-of-consciousness performance that 'sets up' the exhibition, he tells us of their encounter with the extreme degree of representation demanded of the British Museum's Gabelein Man – an Egyptian body that was preserved through desiccation in the arid sands of Egypt. Excruciatingly catalogued, a CT scan of the body provided image data for a very detailed digital reconstruction. A 'virtual autopsy display' invited the public to dig ever deeper into its remains, with a CGI rendering of the body on a touch screen 'offering an interface with the image of the corpse that allows visitors to spin the body on two axes and cut into its surface. Cross-sections are revealed. Layers of skin, muscle and sinew are peeled back, down to the bone, and down past the bone to the black space beneath, (from Sam Keogh's performance 'Four Fold'). The sculptures are made from densely compacted Jesmonite and other substances, some resembling cross sections, with others acting as props. Keogh's work is charged by a nub that he considers a problem – that the representation of a thing can be more effective than the thing itself. Exploring this, he takes us through a jumbled set of memories and mind maps: images stuck to the flaps of bog body skin that he peers beneath, both metaphorically and literally. Rushing around the surface of the image, doing the very thing that he recalled his mother finding insensitive to the dead, he films his performance from his own body. The camera strapped to his chest captures what he sees, and places us as viewers (after the event) in

the place of the artist himself – an embodied eye that sees what he saw, scrapes against what he scraped against, and reveals the watchers watching. He cuts and splices through his own memories, truncating his recollections, and changing paths. These bog bodies once discovered are processed in order to put them on museum display (and many have been lost through those procedures). Once on display they are 'processed' again in order to interpret and represent the thing. Sam Keogh filters them once more. It seems that processing and mediation of this kind is here to stay, growing ever deeper, thicker, more intrusive and more entangled.


Ruth E. Lyons

'Afterings', 2015

Zout / Salt

Met de steun van / Supported by Irish Salt Mining Ltd. Kilroot, Carrickfergus, Co Antrim, Ireland & EU Salt Association

De 'Afterings' van Ruth E. Lyons zijn gehouwen uit massieve brokken zout en worden gepresenteerd op de sokkels van Mikala Dwyer. Hun naam verwijst naar een woord dat de dichter Gerard Manley Hopkins gebruikte om te beschrijven hoe het heilige zich openbaart door de herhaling van woorden of handelingen. Het zout voor Lyons' bekkens werd gehaald uit een geologische zoutlaag van de Zechsteinzee die zich 200 miljoen jaar geleden uitstreckte van Noord-Ierland tot Rusland. De holtes die achterblijven na zoutwinning worden nu gebruikt als opslagruimte voor gas, net zoals in zoutlagen in New Mexico radioactief afval wordt opgeslagen. Elke kom van Lyons is een referentie aan de mineralen en fossiele brandstoffen die dagelijks uit de aarde worden onttrokken, maar ook een spirituele verwijzing naar de Boeddhistische bedelkom, een symbolische erkenning van de aarde.




The 'Afterings' that sit on top of stratigraphic plinths are bowls made of salt. There are eight European salt mines that all extract salt deposits from the gargantuan Zechstein Sea, and Ruth E. Lyons has begun working with one of them. This ancient salt water mass evaporated in the Permian period and its mineral deposits beneath are shared amongst the carved-up territories of nation-states that crowd the top soil. As the salt is extracted (its composition, colour and use-value varying widely in relation to its proximity to the shores of the sea), its vacant real estate is used as storage. The salt-layer of the Zechstein Sea is used for underground gas storage by England, Germany and France, just as the New Mexico salt deposits have now become the repositories of radioactive waste. Of such significance in studying stratigraphy, 'Zechstein' was once a unit of time in the geological timescale. The 'Afterings' are thus quite potent, yet humble objects. They take their name from a word used by the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins in describing how the sacred is revealed through repetition of words or actions. Hand carved by the artist from large lumps donated by these mines, each piece is an example of the minerals and fossil fuels being extracted across the world every day – Earth's ancient, natural deposits harnessed for the use of humankind. Yet within that chilling allegory is something much more peaceful, humble and gestural. Useless as a vessel as it would erode with the presence of water, it is more in the guise of an alms bowl. Atop these stratigraphic plinths designed by Mikala Dwyer, it becomes a supplicant for the earth: a begging bowl, extended, asking to be recognised.

Nicholas Mangan

'A World Undone', 2012

HD kleur, geen geluid / HD colour, silent, 12'00" loop

'A World Undone' toont minuscule deeltjes zirkoon die als glinsterende sterren vertraagd door de ruimte dwarrelen. Zirkoon is een 4,4 biljoen jaar oud mineraal dat werd opgediept uit de vroegste aardkorst van de Jack Hills in West-Australië. Nicholas Mangan vermorzelde een klein staaltje van dit geologische materiaal en reduceerde het tot stof: gefilmd aan 2 500 frames per seconde ving de kunstenaar het mineraal in zijn uiteenspattende vlucht. 'A World Undone' vernietigt één van de oudste stoffen van onze planeet en creëert zo een fantastisch beeld van het universum waaruit het ontstond. In de woorden van de eerste modern-wetenschappelijke geoloog en stratigraaf James Hutton, zogenaamde uitvinder van de 'diepe tijd': "Geen spoor van een begin – geen zicht op een einde."



'A World Undone' by Nicholas Mangan shows particles whirling in slow motion through space. These particles come from Zircon, a 4.4 billion year-old mineral unearthed in Western Australia's remote Jack Hills. Zircon is one of the oldest minerals on the planet, formed in the earth's earliest crust, an ancient skin that developed during a period of intense meteorite bombardment. Filming at 2,500 frames per second, Mangan has captured the mineral in a flight of disintegration. 'A World Undone' takes a tiny piece of the most ancient matter of this world and destroys it, and in doing so creates a fantastical image of the very universe from which it was born. To introduce this project, Mangan uses the words of founding Geologist James Hutton, the so-called discoverer of deep-time: "No vestige of a beginning – no prospect of an end." Hutton is amongst the 'terrestrial timekeepers' or 'stratigraphers' – wardens of time who name the geological eras, dividing time into its logical intervals: the Cenozoic era with its Quaternary and

Tertiary periods; the epochs of Paleocene, Eocene, Oligocene, Miocene, Pleistocene, Holocene and now Anthropocene; the Mesozoic Era, with the Cretaceous, Jurassic and Triassic periods; the Paleozoic era, with the Permian, Carboniferous, Devonian, Silurian, Ordovician and Cambrian periods. Together all of these words represent 542 million years in the past – but only a smidgen of time when compared to our dust cloud of disintegrating Zircon, glistening like stars.

Jean-Luc Moulène

'Laura Bush', Paris, 2014

'George Walker Bush', Paris, 2014

'George Herbert Walker Bush', Paris, 2014

Gepolijst beton / Polished concrete

De drie sculpturen van Laura Bush, George Walker Bush en George Herbert Walker Bush liggen bovenop blauwe, gevouwen dekens: ze worden getoond alsof het een tijdelijke opstelling betreft, vanop de vloer, nauwelijks beschermd. Ze maken deel uit van een breder project van Jean-Luc Moulène: hij naait de openingen van Halloweenachtige maskers van bekende figuren toe, keert ze binnenstebuiten en vult ze met beton. In de context van deze tentoonstelling zouden de Bushes kunnen aangedragen worden om hun lasterlijke acties tegen wetenschappelijk bewijs over de opwarming van de aarde. Maar de hompen op dekens op de grond zijn niet langer Bush, Bush en Bush. Het zijn betonnen sculpturen van onthoofde en demonische figuren uit het verleden, gegoten in een materiaal dat ons allen zal overleven.

The material force of Jean-Luc Moulène's work hops nimbly around a boundless array of forms and material, from photography, glass, clay and, in the case of his series of masks, concrete. The three sculptures in Riddle of the Burial Grounds rest on top of blue, folded blankets. They're the kind of blankets a moving company would use to wrap things, to protect them from damage. The forms have an odd legitimacy from the outset: they're displayed, but as though temporarily; they're protected, but not to the degree an art object would be; and they're presented to us, but only from the floor. Part of a wider body of work, the sculptures are made from imprints of moulds of popular culture: disfigured, engorged, defiled or deflated through the very material process of their creation. Jean-Luc Moulène has bought Halloween-type masks from around the world. He has sewn shut their orifices, turned the masks inside out, before filling them with a mixture of concrete and sand. Although a balance is found between the elasticity of the mask and the weight of the concrete, the resulting sculptures feel like they are poised on the edge of a material and representative precipice. In the circling, spiralling loop of subject, object and represent, these tronche recast themselves repeatedly (while grinning up at us with ghoulish relentlessness). The mask is a thing created to masquerade as something else, and Moulène here selects the visages of some of the most globally recognisable faces and characters. To turn the mask into a mould is of course to deny forever its very purpose. But to invert the mask first, to create an imprint on an object rather than a cast of the mask, confuses our reading of it: it is neither a solid version nor a representative thing; it is a new object entirely. Concrete has ready associations with the built environment, while the purpose of the Halloween mask is to represent and parody. But here, the crashing together of two conflicting materials gives birth to a third thing – the unexpected. As Mihnea Mircea writes of Jean-Luc Moulène during a solo exhibition at Extra City Kunsthall in 2013-14, 'Can an object be said to have its own point of view, not necessarily identical with that of its maker – like Antonin Artaud's 'hammer without a master'? Can an image or an object belong to – and bring together in its 'flesh' – two distinct chronologies, existing at the intersection of histories that take it to different directions?' What are these figures, beyond their material constructions?



Lucy Skaer

'Sticks and Stones (Part 1)', 2015

Zinkloten mahoniehout met tussenstukjes uit porselein, kalksteen, tin, muntstukken, koper, Amerikaanse walnoot, tijgeroog, kornalijn, Tasmaans zwart hout / Sinkler mahogany with inserts of porcelain, limestone, tin, coins, copper, American walnut, tiger's eye, carnelian, Tasmanian black wood

'Sticks and Stones (part 2)', 2015

Keramieken geglazuurde tegels en in keramiek gegoten aardewerk / Ceramic glazed tiles and ceramic cast stoneware

'Sticks and Stones (part 3)', 2015

Blauw Savoy marmer, malachiet / Blue Savoy marble, malachite

'Sticks and Stones (part 4)', 2015

Gegoten- en bladaluminium, gegoten metaal / Cast and sheet aluminium, cast gunmetal

'Sticks and Stones (part 5)', 2015

Triplex en esdoorn met eikenfineer met tussenstukjes uit Libanees cederhout, taxushout, Douglasspar, Burr eik / Ply and maple with oak veneer, inserts of cedar of Lebanon, yew, Douglas fir, Burr oak


'Sticks and Stones (part 6)', 2015

Papierpulp / Paper pulp

'Sticks and Stones (part 7)', 2015

Leisteen / Slate

Het basismateriaal in Lucy Skaers 'Sticks and Stones' is een stuk mahoniehout dat gedurende meer dan een eeuw op de bodem van de rivier Belize lag. Het kostbare houtblok was gekapt voor export tijdens de kolonisatie door de Britten en vertelt een verhaal over materiele cultuur, architectuur en geopolitiek, maar ook over de impact van de ontbossing. Nauwgezet voegde Skaer in de spleetjes van het hout kleine stukjes materiaal toe die ze vond in haar atelier. Dit initieerde een proces waarbij elke plank gekopieerd werd in een nieuw materiaal: hout naar keramiek, keramiek naar marmer, enzo-voort. Tijdens het proces maakte de kunstenaar geen foto's: elke kopie is uitsluitend gemaakt uit referenties naar het vorige materiaal – de betekenis die inherent wordt meegedragen door een materiaal is vaak krachtiger dan de betekenis van de vorm waarin het wordt verwerkt.



Raw material can be as potent a carrier of symbol and meaning as a crafted object. As a simple kindergarten toy will show us, a natural material such as wood can become a window into a myriad of histories – from the science of botany, to the politics of colonial trade, to the aesthetics of furniture and fine art design. The root material of Lucy Skaer's 'Sticks and Stones' is a piece of mahogany that has lain at the bottom of the Belize River for more than a century. Logged for export during the British colonial period, the story of this valuable raw material is interwoven with the history of mate-

rial culture, architecture and geopolitics, as well as forestry and the impact of rainforest depletion on the world environment. Lucy Skaer's Belizian mahogany has been worked into a pair of long, twin, naturally-shaped planks. Each is embedded with 'bits and bobs' in Skaer's words – items from the artist's studio such as prototypes, unsold editions, or tests – that are inserted into 'nooks and crannies' with the artisanal knack of finely crafted furniture. This process then sets off a chain reaction where, one after another, the originals are copied into a new material: mahogany to ceramic; ceramic to marble; marble to aluminium; ply and maple with oak veneer; paper pulp; slate. No images are used in this process, and each copy is made only with reference to the preceding one – a direct process of representation from one material into the next. These transfers of the observable, measurable and perhaps transmittable aspects of one substance into another is key to considering how ideas, messages and even warnings might be communicated across deep-time. In a time when the scanning and 3D printing of objects is becoming increasingly commonplace, 'Sticks and Stones' witnesses a migration of form that takes place through emulation rather than the more forensic accuracy demanded of a copy. The innate meaning that is carried in the character of the materials is as much a shaper of the meaning as the form the material is sculpted into, a potent symbolism brought on by aura, cultural history and political inference. The object of origin in this beautiful series is a hybrid itself – the original Belizian mahogany log was sculpted by water as it lay at the bottom of the river for a century: born of the earth; hacked and hewn by humankind; caressed and sculpted by water; pierced by treasures both natural and artificial. Testimony, perhaps, to the age in which the 'great outdoors' has ceased to exist, and we define instead what Christian Schwägerl calls 'the great inside' – we are not separate from our environment.

Lonnie van Brummelen & Siebren de Haan

'The Social Lives of a Tree', 2015

Installatie, replica van een houten bank, video / Installation, replica of a wooden bench, video

In opdracht van / Commissioned by steirischer herbst 2015; Met de steun van / Supported by Mondriaan Fund & Kibii Foundation, Surinam

In de laatste jaren hebben sommige Zuid-Amerikaanse landen in hun grondwet Moeder Aarde (en dus ook bergen, planten en water) opgenomen als niet-menselijke persoon met eigen rechten. Lonnie van Brummelen & Siebren de Haan vroegen zich af wat er zou gebeuren als een niet-menselijke bewoner van de regenwoudgemeenschap in Suriname getransformeerd zou worden tot een museumbank. De kunstenaars vroegen indianen van de Arawak stam om, met hun traditionele kennis, van het hout uit het regenwoud een bank te maken in de vorm van een schildpad. Die bank werd aan een lokaal Surinaams kunstmuseum geschonken, samen met de film over het project. Voor Riddle of the Burial Grounds creëerden de kunstenaars een replica van de zitbank, wat een extra twist geeft aan het verhaal want nu is een kopie verantwoordelijk voor het tot leven wekken van deze geschiedenis.

'We witness every day how trucks loaded with huge logs drive from the rainforests to the capital. For a few months we have been living in the Republic of Surinam; a small country on the north-eastern coast of South America. For centuries this country was a plantation colony of the Netherlands. The economy of Surinam is based on resource extraction: gold, bauxite, timber. In western societies, when we speak about material, we often refer to refined and pure substances: iron, copper, wood – ready for our use. We tend to forget that this is a modernist conception of matter. In the real

world, out there, material is never unalloyed or disconnected. It is part of a mixture, a larger ecology, an entangled and living organism. In recent years, some Latin American countries have adopted new political constitutions, in which Pachamama (Mother Earth) was recognised as a nonhuman person with rights of its own. These constitutions, which give fundamental rights to entities such as rock formations, vegetation and bodies of water, are based on the communal views of indigenous populations from the Amazonian rainforest. When these forest people speak of 'community', they are referring both to its human and its nonhuman constituents. What would happen if a non-human citizen from the rainforest community is transformed into a museum bench: a seat for deliberation, made for a realm where objects are seen as militant entities, that lure, repulse, become implicated, take a stance and shape evolving constellations? Could such a transfer from one social sphere to another be an alternative for the logic of extraction? This is the experiment we propose.'

– Lonnie van Brummelen & Siebren de Haan, Surinam, June 2015

Economic policy around material resources and an expanded analysis of its impact on communities, cultural histories and the concept of the art object are terrains in which these artists constantly probe – from international sugar trade and tariffs in 'Monument of Sugar' and cultural colonialism in 'Monument to Another Man's Fatherland', to technological transition and the process of image formation in their recent film, 'Episode of the Sea'. For 'The Social Lives of a Tree' the artists have entered the complex culture, knowledge base and economic policies of rainforests by engaging physically and directly with it. With the aim of making a museum bench from a rainforest tree for the steirischer herbst, the artists set off to find a local woodworker. However, like in most resource economies, raw materials in Surinam are mainly extracted to be processed elsewhere. The most populated town in the area housing 10,000 inhabitants, Moengo turned out to have only two woodworkers, both of whom were too busy to help the artists produce a bench. Van Brummelen and de Haan subsequently engaged with the indigenous people of the Arawak tribe who, in response to the artists' request, applied their traditional knowledge, making a bench from rainforest wood in the shape of a turtle. In dialogue with their

Arawak collaborators, the artists donated the bench to a local Surinam art museum, alongside the film that charts their adventures and misadventures in the forest. Visitors to the exhibition Riddle of the Burial Grounds will be sitting on a replica made by the artists – you may even be sitting on it right now – creating a further twist in the tale, and charging a replica with the responsibility of bringing this story to life.


Emmanuel Van der Auwera

'Video sculpture VII (Looking Glass)', 2016

LCD scherm, polarisatiefilter, video / LCD screen, polarization filter, video, loop

'Video sculpture VII (Looking Glass)' van Emmanuel Van der Auwera is opgebouwd rond 'reactievideo's', online gevonden beeldmateriaal van jongeren die zichzelf filmen terwijl ze naar afschuwelijk gewelddadige scènes kijken. De beschermende laag tussen wat zich voor en achter het scherm bevindt, wordt plots erg fragiel. Over grenzen, taal en culturen heen getuigen deze video's van een gedeelde ervaring en gelijkaardige respons op beelden van horror, weezin, angst en schaamte. Wij kijken hoe de kijker kijkt: Van der Auwera ziet in deze video's een allegorie voor het internet waarbinnen de 'kijkers' zich kenbaar maken en verspreiden als zogenaamde 'internet memes', 'internet handles' en online spionnen. Van der Auwera maakt in zijn videosculptuur de gelaagdheid zichtbaar van actoren en materialen binnen deze uitdijende online wereld.

Horror, terror, shame, disgust and fear are assumed to bring out the sincerity in us that other forms of media, entertainment or provocation increasingly struggle to. But when we look at teenagers' online 'reaction videos' – footage of themselves watching heinous and violent crime – the protective barriers between



the screen and the other side of the screen don't feel quite so convincing. Emmanuel van der Auwera peels back the protective, truth-telling skin of the technology these teenagers use – layers of polarising filters, metal, glass and glue – revealing it to be just a collection of materials like any other. His is a stratification of media, technology and the internet: the mother tongue and homeland of a new global youth population. Van der Auwera thinks of these teenage years as 'shapeless' – a time when the drive to define oneself creates a flux in the shape of a person and their position in relation to the world. Yet this fleeting shapelessness is a shared experience, creating sameness across borders, languages and cultural divides within its screen-based interaction. In there, it seems, the 'reaction video' phenomenon that van der Auwera references has tremendous appeal. And yet, the films appear to have a unifying capability: the ability to show us that – despite age, gender or culture – our reactions to footage of horror, humour, and everything in between, is relatively consistent. The polarising filter that van der Auwera peels away is the part of the screen makeup that allow us to the view these images. In other similar works, he'll even leave parts of the 'skin' curled in front of the screen, also capturing the image from their more removed position. Cut away to retain only the eye of one of the figures, the watching of violent crime is itself framed here by the violent act of the screen's destruction. Due to the video's composition, this eye gazes at us while we watch another watcher watching. Van der Auwera sees in these videos an allegory for the internet, as the 'watchers' within are infinitely amplified and magnified in the form of memes, handles and spies. In the artwork, and in the context of this exhibition, these layers are stratified: depicting layers of observers, but also making visible and tangible the material thing: the layers of glue and filters that both transmit and contain that ever-expanding on-line world of images and material.

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